

Application Number/s: 132727/FO/2022

Applicant: Arden University

Agent: Solve Planning

Location: Barlow House, 4 Minshull Street

Proposal: Change of Use of fifth floor from Office (E(g)(i)) to Provision of Education (F1(a)) including provision of a 42-space cycle parking structure adjacent to Major Street necessitating removal of 1.no street tree.

Ward: Piccadilly

Description of Site and Surrounding Area

The application relates to Barlow House, a 7-8 storey building located on an island site bounded by Silver Street to the north, Minshull Street to the east, Major Street to the south and Gold Street to the west. The site is predominantly occupied by the building, with car parking along the north perimeter of the site adjacent to Silver Street and a grassed area with 4.no trees adjacent to Major Street. The surrounding area is characterised by predominantly midrise building, which are primarily in office, education, hotel and apartment use.

The building is not located within a conservation area. However, the building is proximate to the Grade II* listed Britannia Hotel, which is to the northeast of the application property.

Description of Proposal

The application seeks permission for:

- Change of Use of the fifth floor of the building from commercial office space (Use Class E(g)(i)) to the provision of education (Use Class F1(a)).
- Provision of a 42-space timber cycle store adjacent to Major Street. The cycle store is to have a flat, living roof with and be 8.7x3.5m.

Publicity LBC

Site Notice/s Posted and Dates: Posted 11/02/22, Expired 04/03/22.

Press Adverts Published and Dates: Not Required

Neighbour Notification: Notified 02/02/22.

Representations Received: None

Consultations

Highway Services

Tree Officer

Save Unitary Development Plan Policies:

No saved unitary development plan policies are considered relevant in this instance.

Core Strategy Policies:

- Spatial Principles (SP1)

Development in all parts of the city shall be well designed places that enhance quality or create character. They should make a positive contribution to the needs of all members of the community and protect and enhance the built and natural environment.

Development should also minimise emissions, reuse previously developed land where possible and improve access to jobs, services, education and open space by being located to reduce the need to travel and provide good access to sustainable transport provision.

- Existing Employment Space (EC2)

The council shall seek to retain and enhance existing employment space and sites. Alternative uses can only be supported on sites allocated accordingly or if it can be demonstrated that the existing use is unviable due to building age and format, is incompatible with adjacent uses, the existing use is unsuitable for employment or, on balance, proposals are able to offer greater benefits in terms of the Core Strategy's vision and spatial objectives than the existing use.

- Sustainable Transport (T1)

Development should encourage a modal shift away from the private automobile and improve choice by developing alternatives to the car, including to public transport, cycling and walking.

- Development Management (DM1)

All development should have regard to a wide variety of specific issues, including:

- Siting, layout, scale, form, massing, materials and detail
- Impact on surrounding areas in terms of design, scale, appearance and character.
- Effects on amenity (including privacy, light, noise, vibration, air quality, odours, litter, vermin, birds, road safety and traffic generation).
- Accessibility in terms of disabled access and sustainable transport modes.
- Community safety and crime prevention
- Design for health
- Adequacy of internal accommodation and external amenity space
- Refuse storage and collection
- Vehicular access and car parking
- Effects relating to biodiversity, landscape, archaeological and built heritage
- Green infrastructure
- Flood risk and drainage

National Planning Policy Framework Policies:

- Achieving Sustainable Development (2)

The purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development (economic, social and environmental). There is a presumption in favour of sustainable development and sustainable development that accords with up to date development plans should generally be approved without delay.

- Decision-making (4)

LPAs should approach decisions on proposed development in a positive and creative way, utilising pre-application engagement and working proactively with applicant to secure development that will improve the economic, social and environmental conditions of the area. Decision-makers should seek to approve applications for sustainable development wherever possible.

- Building a Strong, Competitive Economy

Planning decisions should help create the conditions in which businesses can invest, expand and adapt. Significant weight should be placed on the need to support economic growth and productivity, taking into account both local business needs and wider opportunities for development.

- Promoting Healthy and Safe Communities (8)

Planning decisions should aim to achieve healthy, inclusive and safe places which promote social interaction, are safe and accessible and enable and support healthy lifestyles.

- Achieving Well Designed Places (12)

The creation of high quality, beautiful and sustainable buildings and places is fundamental to what the planning and development process should aim to achieve. Planning decisions should ensure development:

- Will function well and add to the overall quality of the area over the long term
- Are visually attractive and appropriate in terms of layout and landscaping
- Are sympathetic to local character and history
- Establish and maintain a strong sense of place
- Optimise the potential of a site and create an appropriate mix of development
- Create spaces that are safe, inclusive and accessible.

Trees make an important contribution to character, quality of urban environments and can mitigate against climate changes. Existing trees shall be retained wherever possible.

Assessment

Principle of Change of Use

The proposed change of use from office to education would result in the loss of office space within Manchester City Centre. Core Strategy policy EC2 stipulates that the

loss of office space should be avoided. However, makes allowances in certain circumstances. In this instance, it is not considered that the loss of the small amount of office space in this area of the city centre and within a lower quality building would have a substantial impact on the provision of office space within the city centre. As such, the principle of the change of use is accepted. It is also noteworthy that other floors within the building are already occupied by F1 uses.

Design & Appearance

The change of use of the fifth floor would not lead to a change in the external appearance of the building and is therefore acceptable.

A proposed 42-space cycle store adjacent to Major Street would cause some impact and character change to the area. The cycle store would not be readily visible from any nearby listed buildings and is not in the setting of any listed buildings. It is considered that the proposed timber panels to be applied to the external elevations and a proposed green roof is acceptable.

Though some impact is identified as a result of the position of the cycle store, it is considered that, on balance, the impacts are suitably mitigated by the amended design of the cycle store as well as the gains by way of increased provision of sustainable cycle storage. The position of the cycle storey to the Major Street boundary is acceptable.

Overall, the proposal accords with Manchester Core Strategy policies DM1, SP1 in terms of design, as well as NPPF Sections 2 and 12.

Loss of Tree

The proposed cycle store would require the felling of 1.no street tree along the Major Street boundary. Any loss of trees within Manchester City Centre in particular is resisted. The LPA's Tree Officer was consulted on the proposals. The Tree Officer commented that, on balance, the tree was of poor quality and is not expected to grow to a much larger size due to a restrictive tree pit. As a result, there is no real prospect of the tree becoming of a size, scale or specimen that would be subject to a TPO in the near future. On balance, it is also considered that the benefits byw ay of increasing sustainable travel by providing the cycle storey and resultant reduction in C02 outweighs the loss of the low-quality tree.

Through amendment, the cycle store will now have a green roof, which works towards further mitigating the loss of the tree.

In summary, the proposal accords with Core Strategy policies SP1, DM1 and Section 12 of the NPPF in this regard.

Highway Safety

The Authority's Highway Services team provided no objection to the development, subject to clarification that the cycle store does not have doors that open out over the highway. An amended plan has been received that confirms that this would not be the case and is therefore acceptable. The proposal therefore accords with Core Strategy Policy T1 and Section 2 of the NPPF.

Conclusion

Upon weighing up benefits and impacts of the proposed change of use and provision of the cycle store, it is considered that, on balance, the development represents sustainable development. As per Paragraph 11 of the NPPF, plans and decisions should apply a presumption in favour of sustainable development, with part (c) of the Paragraph stating that development proposals that accord with an up-to-date development plan should be approved without delay.

RECOMMENDATION:

That planning permission be granted subject to the following planning conditions:

That planning permission be refused for the following reasons